

Why Is It So Hard for Christians to Pray

by David Wilkerson

Christians struggle with prayer due to lukewarm love for God, perverted priorities, and other reasons, but prayer mixed with faith is the answer to every problem.

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Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of prayer and the need for believers to prioritize it in their lives. He acknowledges that praying is the solution to all our problems and that God has made numerous promises to answer our prayers. The speaker then discusses the reasons why it can be difficult for people to pray, and encourages listeners to repent and seek God's face. He warns that hard times are coming and urges believers to develop a disciplined life of prayer in order to hear God's voice and know Him intimately.

Transcript

This message is one of the Times Square Church Pulpit series. It was recorded in the sanctuary of Times Square Church in Manhattan, New York City. Other tapes are available by writing WORLDCHALLENGE PO BOX 260 LINDALE, TEXAS 75771 or calling 903-963-8626.

None of these messages are copyrighted and you are welcome to make copies for free distribution to friends. Are you glad you're saved? Hallelujah. Wonderful people.

Praise the Lord. I want to talk to you about something that has perplexed me for a long time. Something I simply can't understand.

I have never been able to solve this problem. But I'm going to try to deal with the issue tonight. And the problem is, why is it so hard for Christians to pray? Why is it so hard? Why do so few Christians have a daily prayer life? What's the reason? We're going to talk about it tonight.

Father, I know this is something that is close to your heart. Oh God, I pray by your Spirit you come upon me tonight. I thank you for truth that sets us free.

We don't come here just to soak in the truth and waste it. We come here to receive the truth that we may be molded by it. We may be shaped by it.

We may be challenged and stirred and changed. But oh God, that we become more into the image of Christ. Lord, speak to our hearts tonight.

And Lord Jesus, I pray that after this service tonight, we would really be a praying church. We would be a praying church. In Jesus' name, touch my lips.

Holy Spirit, anoint me. Let everyone have ears to hear what the Spirit has to say tonight. In Jesus' name, amen.

Now, we know that prayer mixed with faith is the answer to everything. Did you hear me? The prayer of faith that we pray every day is the answer to absolutely everything. The scripture says, be anxious or nervous about nothing.

But in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be known unto God. Everything. Every day, every problem, every need, every trouble, every crisis.

In everything, we are to seek God first. You don't pray second, third. You don't go to everybody else and then finally wind up on your knees in the secret closet.

First of all, before the telephone, before a friend, before a counselor, before the pastor, before anything else, seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. All these things will be taken care of, he said. We are to pray first and not last.

You know, the church today, the church body is in a mess. If you don't believe that, you ought to read the letters that we get from all over the United States and this great mailing list we have, we've been talking about. And it's heartbreaking to hear of so many families, Christian families, broken and divorced and defeat and fear and overcome by sin, divorce and depression and covetousness and worldly mindedness.

And the Bible says it's going to get worse and worse. Evil men and seducers will watch worse and worse, the scripture says. It's an amazing thing, though people will send to us their prayer requests.

I know today, every Tuesday is our minister's prayer meeting. We have these boxes and we lay hands on them and we pray over them, diligently pray over them. But I know I have a sense in the Holy Spirit that very few of those who write those prayer requests to us ever pray, hardly ever pray at all.

They go about their day with this cloud hanging over their head. They worry, they fret, but they don't have the time. They can sit and watch hours of television.

They can go to ball games. They have time to go out and eat. They have time for family and friends, but they don't have a half an hour to shut themselves in with the Lord and touch God in prayer.

And for the life of me, I don't understand that. Why is it that we know that the answer is right there? The answer is in that secret closet. We know that, and even though we know it, in our troubles we don't turn to the Lord.

We don't go to prayer. Why is it so hard for Christians in hard times, in times of crisis, why is it so hard to go into the closet? When I say closet, it's just a secret place. Why is it so difficult? Why is it so hard to get Christians to pray about their problems, pray about their needs? We have an abundance of promises that God hears us and will answer us.

This book is full of promises that He'll do it. Let me give you just a few. The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous.

His ear is open to their cry. The righteous cry the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. Another.

This is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we shall receive the petitions that we desire of Him. We know it.

There's another. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Jesus said, and in all things, all things, whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, He shall receive.

The prayer of the upright is His delight. He heareth the prayer of the righteous. There's another.

He will regard the prayer of the destitute. He will not turn aside their prayer. Beloved, the Bible, from cover to cover, is a testimony.

It cries out to us, promise after promise, wonderful, blessed promises. Pray, seek my face, I'll answer you. This is the answer to every problem, every need.

The promises are so profound, they're so varied and so many. I don't know how we miss it. We have these promises.

God says, you come. Listen to the boast of David. David said, in the day when I cried, thou answeredst me, and you strengthened me with strength in my soul.

He said, I've proven you, God. In all my trials, I didn't go to anybody else. I went to you, I sought you, and you heard me, you answered me, and you gave me strength for the battle that I faced.

David said, I called in trouble, and God delivered me, and he answered me. Now, folks, this is an amazing thing. There's not one of us in this building tonight that has not read and re-read these.

We almost take them for granted. All of these promises that God says, you turn to me in your trouble first, you come right to me, you pray and you seek my face, you give me quality time, and I'm going to answer you. I'm going to answer you, and I will eventually bring you out of all your problems, all your troubles, that we have these promises.

Why is it that we know that he has answered everything in prayer, and it's mixed with faith. We have all these promises. Why is it so difficult to get Christians to pray in spite of all of these promises? See, this is the thing that's been boggling my mind.

Not only do we have all these promises, not only do we have this knowledge that prayer is the answer to everything, but the scripture also makes it clear that we've been warned of the dangers of neglecting prayer. We've been warned about it. The scripture says, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? How are you going to escape? The Greek word for neglect means of little concern or to take lightly.

He said, how are you going to escape all the depression, the fear, and the anger of God? How are you going to escape that if you're going to take prayer lightly and it's really of no great concern to you? He

said, how are you going to escape? I wonder if you're concerned about prayer. How lightly do you take this matter of having calling time every day alone with the Lord? God says, how do you expect to escape the ruin and devastation that's coming? Hard times are coming. Difficult times are coming.

Folks, it's the calm before the storm, and if you have not yet learned to get along with him and hear his voice and to know him, what are you going to do? Where will you go if you've not only learned to exercise your faith in prayer? God looks at the church today, and I believe he's grieved, he's deeply wounded, because like Israel of old, we take so little time for him. Jeremiah 2.32, can a maid forget her ornaments or a bride her gown? Yet my people have forgotten me days without number. Here's the question, it's what I don't understand.

Why is it that God's own people who need deliverance, they need a miracle. There are financial crises. There are all kinds of needs.

There are burdens. There are jobs that are needed, apartments that are needed, families that need to be saved. So many, many needs.

And why is it that God's people are under the greatest attack in history? Some of you sit here now, you've never been attacked out of hell like you have been lately. It's an absolute demonic attack from the powers of darkness coming against you. Temptations that you face that are overwhelming.

And you say, I love the Lord with all my heart. And I believe that prayer is the key. We use all of those clichés.

But why is it that things have not changed in all these centuries and God is still saying, can a maid forget her ornaments and a bride her gown? No, she can't because they're precious to her. Yet my people have forgotten me days without number. They need me.

Here's the answer to everything. Here are the promises that I've made. And still they don't seek me.

Still they don't pray. Why? Hebrews 10. I want you to turn to Hebrews 10 if you will with me, please.

I want to show you something. Hebrews 10. Folks, don't let your mind wander.

Will you stay with me? You know why I'm preaching this tonight? Because we're going to call 1st of January, we're going to call this church to prayer again. And God told me to preach this tonight and talk to you. And I'm going to give you some reasons why Christians don't pray.

And I'm going to pinpoint you tonight and you're going to find yourself in these reasons why it's so hard for you to pray. I hope that God will answer some of your questions and make it easier for you to enter into his promises now. Hebrews 10.

Start with verse 19, please. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. By a new and living way which he has consecrated for us.

Through the veil, that is to say, his flesh. For having a high priest over the house of God. Let us draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith.

Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Folks, look at me, please. Here's what I think bothers me and concerns me more than anything else.

We know it, we preach it, we believe it somewhere deep in our heart. Yes, Jesus died to open up a way for me to have access to the throne of God. The very God of the universe, the creator God.

I believe Jesus came and made it possible for me to be justified. And they write in the sight of God in spite of not arrived yet. But he has he has imparted to me or contributes to me the righteousness of Jesus.

Though I'm still working by the power of the Holy Ghost to overcome some of the problems in my life. Yet I am accepted by God. He's made a way for me in the Bible.

And we have an invitation here. Jesus said, I made a way for you through my blood to come right to the father for all your needs, all your problems, all your sicknesses, disease, everything. You come to me.

And then he says, you have access to the father. Come boldly to the throne of grace. There is absolutely nothing standing between you and the heavenly father right now.

If you confess your sins and you believe in Jesus Christ with all your heart, you can walk right into the presence of God. And make your presence known and enjoy his presence. Make your petitions.

No worship him and praise him. You have every right into the holy of holies. Verse twenty five.

Not forsaking the assembly of ourselves together as the matter of some is but exhorting one another. So much the more as we see the day approaching. He said the days approaching now the day of trouble, the day of tribulation.

He said even more now as days go by, getting closer to the coming of the Lord. It's time to seek my face. It's time to be in the closet with me, getting to know me.

Then the next verse said, but if we sin willfully after that, we receive the knowledge of the truth. There remain, if no more sacrifice for sins, but a fearful looking before judgment and fire and ignition, which will devour the adversaries. Now, folks, you know what he's saying? If you do not take advantage of it, you are embarrassing the Holy Ghost.

You're doing despite to the holy grace of God. The scripture says you're doing despite to the grace of God. He said you're by your actions, by not coming daily to this place of prayer, you're saying by your neglect.

He wasted his blood. His crucifixion was in vain because we just neglect. We take it lightly that he is paid with his own blood, his own life, that we may be able to pray and seek the face of God and answer every problem in our life.

And we do despite to the grace of God. We embarrass the Holy Ghost. Verse 26, if we sin willfully, if we receive the knowledge of the truth, see, we have the knowledge that we have all these promises.

We have the knowledge that it's the answer. We have the knowledge of the invitation access to the heavenly father. We have all of this.

And he said, if you have all this knowledge and you willfully stay away from his presence, you willfully do not go to the throne of grace to receive his touch. He said, then there's nothing left. There's no.

The sacrifice was in vain. There's no other sacrifice. There's nothing else left.

He said, I'll judge my people for they've insulted the spirit of grace. That's it. That's an insult to my son.

He give his very life just to open the door right there. So you and I have access into the throne of God and we don't take advantage of it. Now, let me talk to you about this.

We know that we're to pray about everything. We know that that's the answer to all our problems. We have all these numerous promises that he will answer us.

And we have been powerfully warned about the danger of neglecting this salvation. And when you're not praying, you're neglecting your salvation, the grace of God and all the provisions he's made. Then why is it so hard for us to pray? Let me give you.

There are many reasons I'm going to go only with over four of them tonight with you and see if you fit any one of these categories. Now, I'm not coming here to to spank anybody. I'm speaking to myself as well.

I want you to receive this is from the Holy Spirit, because God's trying to make Times Square Church a praying church, a praying church. All right. Number one.

The reason it's so hard for Christians to pray many Christians is because they have a lukewarm love for God, for Jesus. They have an inexpensive love. They don't want the expensive love that cost them a discipline.

When Jesus spoke to the fish in church, that church that he said had left their first love, he acknowledged. He said, you are hardworking people. You hate sin.

You hate compromise. You will not stand for false doctrine in your midst. You don't faint.

You when you're persecuted, you stand up and you count for the Lord. You take a stand for the gospel. He commends them for all the activities and all the things that they've done.

But he says, you forsaken that disciplined life, that first love that you had that brought you into my presence. What the Lord is saying, I don't see much of you anymore. I don't see much.

You're working for me. You talk about me. You tell everybody you love me, but I don't see you anymore.

I don't see you. You see, people who have a cold love, they don't pray. Nobody expects a dead Christian to pray.

That's not their nature. But if you're going to tell me you love Jesus, how do you love somebody without spending time with them? How in the world do you love them? That's not only good. That won't even go for the girl that you're engaged to.

You tell her you love her and you're never there. You're never around. You don't speak occasionally.

You come into her presence. Maybe once a week you come in and say, honey, I love you. Goodbye.

She won't put up with that. He won't put up with that. Doesn't matter how loud you praise God in this church.

It doesn't matter how you go all over the city testifying and preaching on the street or subways. It doesn't matter how many... I don't care if you're out every night on the raven truck. I don't care if you're talking to drug addicts every day.

I don't care of all the things you do in the choir or ushering or any other activity in this church. You don't love him if you're not with him alone. You can't be intimate in a circle like this.

This is corporate. That's fine. We worship.

We praise God. That's all a part of the program of the church of Jesus Christ. That's a part of it.

But there is no way you can love him without being alone with him. Oh, you love him all the time. But to express that love.

See, we are married to Christ. The Bible says we are his spouse. Her husband and wife have times alone.

What kind of marriage is it when there's no time alone? Where there's no intimacy? In my intimate moments, I don't want anybody around. I want to be alone. That's what intimacy with Jesus is all about.

Where Jesus has you all to himself. There's no one else around. He has you all to himself.

But you see, people don't pray because they're not in love with him anymore. They have left. The Bible says you have left it.

Something happened. You drifted away from that. You once had it, but you drifted away from it.

We're all preaching. I could preach and preach about the need for prayer. I can provoke you.

I can condemn you. I can convict you. I can yell at you.

But that's not going to change it. That's not going to make you a prayer warrior. That's not going to give you intimacy.

The only way you're going to have that is say, Oh, God, restore to me that first love. God, help me to realize that this is going to cost me something. There's some discipline involved.

Hallelujah. That's one reason. Let's go to another reason.

Perverted priorities. Perverted priority. A priority is the importance you place on something.

Many people don't pray because it's really not a priority. The priority is family. Now, of course, in the world, God isn't even on the list.

Outside there, the people you work with, God isn't even on the list. God and prayer and all these things are not even on the list of priorities. But you're not going to pray unless prayer is a first priority in your life above everything else.

But you see, housewives priority is cleaning the house, washing dishes, all of these things that need to be done. I don't want to go to a house that's dirty. I have I got a thing.

I have everything clean and in place. That's my wife. And she said, if you want it that way, you help me clean the dishes and you help me.

Hey, I do dishes, I wash, I do the shopping. And I'm a fairly good cook. Folks, none of those things are priority.

They have to be done. But they take second, third, fourth, fifth place. God says, I want to see you put me first.

Above your family. Above your job. Above everything.

There's a priority. And you will not pray until you make it a priority, a top priority in your life. The days of Noah and Lot, the priority is just what it is today.

First, money, pleasure, lust, family. Let me talk about priorities in the spiritual realm. I'm not against revivals.

I thank God wherever he's moving. If it's a true revival, I thank God. But you know what concerns me? And I say it with all the love in my heart.

I see thousands of Christians running all over the world to get into a revival meeting where somebody can, they want to get touched. They want to go down and they want to experience either an ecstatic experience or they want to be touched by God and feel his presence. But you know, you can go all over the world.

You can have prophets. You can have teachers. You can have evangelists lay hands on you.

You can go down and you can lay there for an hour. You can be knocked, listen, even under the spirit of God, true spirit of God, you can be knocked down and not spend ten minutes in prayer, the whole bit. You go down, you get on a plane, you don't pray.

You didn't pray before you went because if you'd been praying and seeking God, you wouldn't have to go anywhere else because you'd get it and you'd seek across it. But you get on a plane, you spend all that time, you go two or three days, you wait in a line, you go in there looking, waiting for a touch from somebody, and you can get touched. That'll last you maybe two or three weeks and it's going to wear out.

But I want to tell you, that's not what pleases God because I know thousands of people will testify, I went to such a place or an evangelist and I got a touch from God. You should be getting a touch every day in your secret closet along with him. And the thing that bothers me about many revivals, that people have time to sit for three hours in a revival meeting and never 15 minutes alone with God.

Amazing. Hallelujah. The Lord doesn't want your leftover itty-bitty time.

He doesn't want remnant time. He wants your best quality time. Now, if you're an early riser, he wants your early hours.

If you're a late person like me, give him your late hours because I'm at my best between 11 and 2 o'clock in the morning. I mean, I'm wide awake and then about 2, I go out. Well, that means I have to sleep till 8 o'clock or sometimes 8.30. I'm not up every night like that.

Sometimes I get to bed 12 or 1 o'clock, but I give him the time that I'm most awake. I used to, I think I told you this, people kept saying they get up 4 or 5 o'clock to pray, and I've always envied people like that. But see, I was an evangelist and traveled all over the world, and I had to be up at night because I wouldn't get home from crusades till midnight sometimes.

And so I developed this late hour syndrome. And I was feeling pretty bad about it one night because it was 2 o'clock in the morning. I said, Lord, I wish I could get up early and pray.

And he said, how early do you want to be? It's 2 o'clock. I've never worried about it since. If you can't get up in the morning and you're sleepy, go back to bed.

Don't get up and give God some sleepy yawning. I just, ugh. I listened to a preacher talk about laying before the Lord.

He slept. He would fall asleep. He'd be there.

He'd wake up 2 hours later. He'd pray for 2 hours. He didn't pray for 2 hours.

He was sleeping for 2 hours. Give the Lord your best time. Give him your wide awake time.

Make it a priority. Malachi said, if you offer the blind for sacrifice, is that not evil? And if you offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it to your governor. See if he'll be pleased with you or accept your person.

He said, you take your governor, a lame blind little lamb as a sacrifice and see if he'll not deal with you. You know what God expected Israel to do? They were to go into their flock and they were to examine every lamb and pick out the most perfect specimen there was without a blemish and bring the most perfect specimen to the altar as a sacrifice. That's saying, I give God best.

God is priority. You will not pray until prayer along with God is your number one top priority. Otherwise, it's perverted.

You tell me you don't have time to pray? I don't believe that. I've never believed that. You make time for what you have as a priority.

You make time. You make time for everything else. Your friend calls you.

You make time. You make time for everything. You can make time for prayer.

I had a meeting years ago in one of the largest churches in America. One of the busiest pastors ever met. And he made a statement.

I don't have time to pray. And that's why I was one of the deadest churches ever preached in in my life. There was no life.

How can there be life? How can the church be praying if the pastors are not praying? Number three, many do not pray because they've learned to live without prayer. They have settled into a lifestyle, a walk with God, they call it, without needing prayer. They're satisfied to come to church.

They're faithful to church. Folks, I have been to funerals. I have buried Christians that have walked with God for 40 and 50 years.

They're in their 70s and 80s when they die. They never miss church. This is the end of side one.

You may now... But they died not knowing the Lord. I've known them. I've pastored many of them.

When I stand before the casket, I know there's a man that had hours and hours in front of a television set. He had hours for football games, basketball games. He was a sport fanatic all his life and had time for gardening, had time for vacations and trips.

And I know for a fact a man never spent more than... never spent 15 minutes a day with the Lord alone. I fear for Christians who have learned to live without prayer. And they have brought this sacrifice as if the Lord is pleased as long as I'm morally clean, as long as I don't hurt anybody and I try to do my best, try to help everybody, stay away from sins and just do the best I can, love God and come to church.

That's okay. They have given the Lord that sacrifice. And to them, that's all that God requires of them.

But I fear that they will be among those who come before his throne and he says, Oh, yes, you did mighty works, miracles, you prayed for sick, you had a heart for people. But he said, I don't know you. You never talked to me.

You weren't in my presence. I really never got to know you. He says, depart from me.

I don't know you. That's the thing I fear. I hear the Lord saying, I have become a stranger unto my own brethren, an alien to my mother's children.

I've become a stranger. I think of prayerless Christians who spend little or no time alone with the Lord to learn his ways. And I hear this again.

How should we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? How does a Christian who expects to be raptured or taken when Jesus comes, whatever theological term you want to use? How does this Christian stand before Jesus and the books are open and there's no record at all of time spent with the Lord? And this Christian says, now, Lord, I know. Because we're going to give an account, the Bible says. We're going to give an account.

And stand before the Lord and say, well, Lord, I know I didn't have time for you. I had time for everything else. I had time for my children.

I had time for my job. I had time for. I know, Lord, I didn't spend much time.

Occasionally I did, but I didn't have time. I know I'm not what you would call praying child. The Lord, I'm ready now to spend eternity with you.

I'm ready now to seek you. Lord, I didn't get to know you then. But man, we have a whole eternity now to get to know each other.

Do you think that's going to stand? You can get by without prayer for a long time. But I tell you what, those who don't pray, they go deeper and deeper into despair, more and more dependent on the flesh. They turn to the arm of flesh rather than to the arm of the Lord.

And there's confusion on every side. Prayerless preachers are powerless preachers. Prayerless Christians are powerless Christians.

I tell you what, if a preacher doesn't pray. I can tell when anybody's in the pulpit. I can tell whether they pray or not.

A man who doesn't pray can tell good stories. He can make you laugh. He can entertain you.

But he can't convict you. He can't move you to prayer or seek the face of God because you can tell it all the time. God help us.

I don't want storytellers ever sharing this. It's all I can do is tell stories. There's nothing wrong with telling stories.

But I would tell you something. There had better be a fire behind it. There ought to be a message behind it.

Let's go to number four here. Some people quit praying and have a hard time praying because they don't believe it works for them. They say, Pastor Dave, I prayed.

I tried. I did everything. I fasted.

I prayed. I believe God. And there's something I prayed about for so long.

I've not seen it happen. They get discouraged and they give up. They say, I don't know whether it's me.

I don't know whether it's my lack of faith. But prayer is not working for me. I hear that so much.

The scripture in Isaiah 58 says they seek me daily. God's describing his own people. They seek me daily.

They delight to know my ways. They did righteousness. They ask of me.

They take delight in approaching to me. Wherefore, they say, however, why do we fast and you see not? Why do we afflict our soul and you take no notice? And this is what I hear sometimes from a young lady who say, I've sincerely prayed, Pastor, that God would bring somebody to my life. I've prayed for five years, six years, seven years, and it doesn't happen.

And they get totally discouraged and then finally go out and try to make it happen themselves. I got a letter today from somebody who mentioned a friend who just got weary of waiting and went out and married a young man, found out he's a drug addict. And now he doesn't want anything to do with her.

A pastor wrote me last week. He said, Brother Dave, last week I shut my church down. I disbanded it.

He said, I quit. We prayed for revival. It didn't come.

We needed a building. We prayed for a building. It never came.

He said, we decided that we wouldn't go on. We dwindled down to 30 people. Pastor Dave, it just didn't work.

I quit. I'm going to go get a job. Well, he needs to go get a job.

The man, God bless his heart, doesn't belong in the ministry. You see, the Bible makes it very clear that God's not going to answer prayer just that you can spend it on your lust or pleasure. This is what the scripture says.

You ask and you don't receive because you ask amiss or wrongly that you may consume it upon your own lust. You're simply trying to satisfy something you want. You're not asking for his will.

It's something that you want. You're not ready to submit your will to God and let him have his way, doing his time in his way. You're going to dictate to God to satisfy the lust of your heart.

You say, I'm tired of living alone. God, you must bring somebody into my life. God can give you grace until he does it.

He can be your husband. He can be your wife. He can be all to you until his answer comes.

I don't care if a million voices cry out, God hasn't answered prayer to me, for me. I don't care if a million voices say God doesn't answer prayer. Let every man be called a liar because he said God answers the righteous man.

God answers and hears. Let every man be called a liar. To stand in what he says in his word.

Hallelujah. Jesus said, all things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, he shall have it. He said, if you really believe, you're going to wait and you're going to expect and you're going to hold on.

It doesn't matter how long it is, you hold on in faith. You believe God. And I want to tell you something, there's something you've been praying about for a long time.

You're not trying to consume it on your own lust or fulfill your own pleasure with it. You can mark it down that God's testing your faith. He's trying your faith.

And the reason he's testing it, he wants to come forth as pure gold so that you can get many, many answers to prayer. Not only for yourself, but your family, your friends and for the church of Jesus Christ and for sinners. God wants you to be a man or woman of faith.

And he sometimes will withhold his answer. He will not answer you immediately because he's testing you to see if you're going to say, I give up. He doesn't answer.

No, he says, you hold on. You keep trusting me. And when the answer comes, I've prepared you now.

I've brought out a faith in you that's pure gold. And now you're all you have to do sometimes is to will it. And God will do it.

I read the story of a godly, godly saint, a dear old sister who walked with God for years. And she walked so close to the Lord. People came from everywhere to be prayed by her.

And some woman had come and asked for prayer. And she said, all right, I'll pray for you. And she got a letter from the woman.

And she said, thank you. I've been healed. And his sister wrote her back her call and says, I'm sorry, I didn't pray for you.

I forgot. I didn't pray for you. And she went to the Lord, said, well, why did you hear that woman? I didn't pray for her.

And she said her faith was weak. Why did you do it? He said, it's because you've gotten to know me. This is the answer we gave.

You've become so close to me. The very desire you had for the woman, I fulfilled it for you. Very desire that you had.

You see, that's what the Lord wants with us. It's not that some pastor is trying to beat us over the head and say, pray, pray, pray. It's the God saying, I want to I want to make you a praying church.

Now, let me talk to you about prayer meetings for a moment before I close. Prayer meetings are wonderful. Prayer meeting night is wonderful.

The best thing that any church can have is a prayer meeting that's packed and people excited about it. It's wonderful. But, folks, let me tell you something.

If a prayer meeting becomes just that two hours out of the week where God's people get together and they pray corporately, I don't care what they pray about, how diligently. I don't even even if the power of God comes down and consumes the sacrifice, that that's all that we're giving to him. That's wonderful.

I could go all over the country and boast. We've got a church packed with people on Friday nights. We've got all night prayer meetings.

That's wonderful. Folks, that's just what a praying church ought to have. But, folks, it can be merely a form of boasting.

And that doesn't make a praying church in itself. You can have all night prayer meetings. You can have a one night time where everybody in the church, we could talk it out.

We could have five thousand running out of time, have five thousand in a prayer meeting and do it once a week. But if those five thousand Christians were meeting, were not meeting alone with Jesus, having that time, intimacy with him, praying and seeking, pouring out their heart, it's still not a praying church. It's not a praying church.

But once every one of us in God's house have learned to go to him and we've made it a priority and we seek him with all of our heart and we go first to him and we have developed this time with the Lord, it doesn't have to be the same hour every day. But if everyone calls themselves by the name of Jesus is praying daily, seeking his face, I'll tell you, when we get together, then the glory and the power of God moves because it's become a praying church. Now, the second week in January, we're going to have the board out there again in the rotunda and we're going to have 24 hour prayer chain going again.

I don't know what it's going to do is lead us, but we're going to be fasting and praying. He said, you're going to pray and supplicate with Thanksgiving. We're going to thank God for everything he did.

Folks, last year we did this and we said we're going to make it a year of prayer for our young people. We started in January and February. Our youth pastor just told us today that they noticed the change in February.

The spirit of God began to move upon our young people and God began to do something. Our young people are growing in the Lord. The numbers are increasing and God is doing a good work.

God has answered that prayer and he's answering it right now. We're going to call the church to prayer, but we're going to ask you to go home and pray. We're going to ask you to sign up.

We're going to ask you to fast and pray. We're going to ask you in that week to develop a habit of prayer. When that week is done, or if we go on two weeks or three weeks, I don't know, as the Lord leads us, that you would make it a practice, that you would become a man of prayer, a woman of prayer, seeking him with all of your heart and soul.

Beloved, that's the answer to the healing of your marriage. That's going to be the answer to the unsaved people in your family. It may not happen overnight.

It may take time, but God can send conviction and change and transform their lives. I want you to stand with me, please. Will you answer me this question? Has it been hard for you to pray? Folks, I believe we've got hundreds here who are prayer warriors, who love to pray and who are praying.

By the way, during every service, right down under this stage, there's stairs right in the back. Right under this stage, there's a big room. If you've never been down there, you need to get down there.

And during every service, there are people praying for the message that will change lives. Spurgeon, the great preacher years ago in London, had a congregation of about 5,000. But every service, they're under in the basement.

500 people were praying while Spurgeon preached. 500. Folks, we need more people that are willing to take just one service out of the week and go downstairs and pray.

During the service, during the preaching, that God would send conviction and save and heal and transform lives. We need every ministry in this church. Guys, choir, children, every department ought to have their own prayer meeting and seek in the face of God.

This ought to be the prayingest machine on the face of the earth. We ought to be a praying, seeking people with all of our hearts. Oh, God, I want to be able to pray with more diligence and love than I've ever prayed in my life.

Lord, I receive this tonight for myself as one of the pastors of this church. I receive the word that you put in my heart. I receive it, Lord.

I ask you to change me. Help me to make it even more of a priority. Not just because I'm a pastor.

Not just because I have more time than people who have a nine to five job or whatever time it may be. But Lord Jesus, let every one of us, those that have jobs, those that are occupied and so busy. Oh, God, let us shut everything down for at least an hour a day.

Getting alone with you in the word and in prayer and devotion and worship. Folks, I have to stop a minute. Let me tell you what I believe.

Listen to it now. Take an hour to take your first 15 minutes in the word. First of all, when you get into the Lord's presence, say begin to talk to the Holy Spirit.

I'm not understand this unless you open it to me. Now, Holy Spirit and start reading systematically in the Psalms, especially ought to be absorbing Psalms and the Proverbs. They go a chapter two in the New Testament and the old.

Just don't go randomly market and ask the Lord to speak every time you're alone with him to say something to you. If you if you will study Proverbs before you go to prayer, if you'll read a chapter every day from Proverbs and when you're done, start all over again. You'll never gossip again in your life because you'll be convicted.

God will lead you. You will have faith. You will you will you will have the character of Jesus Christ come out in you and then spend the next 15 minutes just in loving him.

Just praise him. Just love him. Lift your heart out to him and forget everybody and everything else.

And just I love you, Jesus. I worship you. Spend 15 minutes and just loving and worshipping him.

Walk around if you're sleepy. If you get tired, jump if you have to. Anything to keep your heart awake.

And then after that, you've got to have at least 15 minutes where you just sit in his presence, not say a word. So Holy Spirit, talk to me, talk to me. And in that time, you have to exercise faith more than any other time that God will speak.

He said, my sheep know my voice. They hear. And you take every problem or I have a problem with my aunt Jane.

What am I supposed to do about it, Lord? And wait, take a problem every day. I take every problem of this church like that. I go right to prayer and say, God, what do you want me to do? If I don't hear anything, he don't want me to do anything right now.

He'll tell you. And you wait in his presence, just saying, I love you, Jesus. But I need a word from you now.

First thing, you're going to tell you how much he loves you. He's going to pour his love out on you. And when you come to the house of God, he's going to open up your mind to understand like you have never understood it before in your lifetime.

Hallelujah. All you fellows, you guys from Timothy House, Sarah House, you become men and women of prayer and seek the face of God. God will take you so fast in him.

You will grow. God will open doors for you. You'll get to know him.

He'll speak to you. You'll make your life count. There's no shortcut.

There's no other way. It has to be that way. Now, Father.

I'm asking you, Holy Spirit. Father, by the power of your spirit that you make this a praying congregation, a praying church, not just a prayer meeting night. Lord, on Thursdays, we're going to see you move more and more in our prayer meeting nights.

God's going to come down and move. We're going to see that grow. We're going to see God do miraculous things in our midst.

But, oh, God, far more important is that we have that everyday time with you, intimate, alone, secretly worshipping and praising and loving you. Lord, even those who are in crowded conditions, they can find a corner somewhere. They can find a little chair.

They can find a little place and just shut in with you, Lord. They'll make a way, Lord. They'll make a way.

I'm going to open the altars now. For those who have to make a confession before God. Lord, I have neglected this salvation of mine.

I have neglected it. I have not been praying and seeking your face. And I repent.

I repent. And I'm going to ask you, Lord, when I leave the altar tonight, that my life will be changed from now on. And I will have, with the help of the Holy Ghost, a disciplined life of prayer.

And if you're backslidden, if you have a need from the Holy Ghost, if you're not right with God, come and join these. All over the church, up in the balcony, you can go to the stairs on either side and come down. Let's repent before God.

If you say, Pastor, I've got to repent tonight, the message is for me because I have not been diligent before the Lord in seeking him. I love him, but I've not been seeking him as I should have. Evidently, I've left my first love.

I've not made it a priority in my life. I've somehow been getting along without it, and I don't want to go that way any longer. This is the conclusion of the tape.

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